UNITED
NATIONS

S

Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1994/294*
17 March 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 11 MARCH 1994 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF YUGOSLAVIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Upon instructions of my Government, I have the honour to refer to the letter from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations (S/1994/248), addressed to you, containing the statement adopted by the States members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in New York, on the situation in the so-called sanjak. In this connection, I would like to draw your attention to the following.

This statement contains a series of unfounded accusations, untruths and false assertions. Proceeding from the absurdity of the allegations and their utterly malicious tone and content, the statement would not have deserved any comment had it not contained an obvious intent to interfere dangerously in the internal affairs of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and to undermine its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The very title of the statement on the situation in "sanjak in the former Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)" is unacceptable and deliberately ignores the historical facts. Firstly, the Republics of Serbia and Montenegro are not parts of the "former" Yugoslavia, but of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Secondly, under the current Constitutions of the Republics of Serbia and of Montenegro, "sanjak" is not a territorial unit nor has it ever been one. As a term, "sanjak" was used to denote administrative units during the occupation of the Balkans by the Ottoman Turk Empire. However, the name of the region throughout history has been Raska.

The alleged geographical and historical individuality of the so-called sanjak, the idea fervently pushed forward lately by the extremist Muslim organizations and forces, particularly from Bosnia and Herzegovina, exposes territorial pretensions with a view to having this territory incorporated in the so-called "High" or "Upper Bosnia".

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* Reissued for technical reasons.

Such aspirations are championed by the Muslim separatists from the area, some of whom left the region to join the Muslim army of Alija Izetbegovic or became officials in the Muslim-dominated Government of the former Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their overriding political goal is to internationalize the issue of "sanjak", i.e. to snatch it from the Republics of Serbia and Montenegro. The Muslim leadership of Bosnia and Herzegovina obviously harbours territorial pretensions vis-à-vis the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia with a view to connecting this region with the Muslim part of the former Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Metohija and the Muslim-populated areas of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

The allegations of "... ongoing violations of human rights ..." and "... policy of repression and ethnic cleansing ..." of the Yugoslav Muslims in the region of Raska are absolutely unfounded and are in contradiction to the facts and the situation on the ground.

The Muslim population is fully incorporated in all spheres of life in the Republics of Serbia and Montenegro and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, they enjoy equal rights and full protection under the federal as well as the republican Constitution. The Muslims occupy highest-ranking positions in economic, political and cultural life without any discrimination whatsoever.

The great majority of the Muslims are loyal citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They do not in general support the militant policies of the Party for Democratic Action (SDA) and its leaders, whose plans to instigate an armed rebellion and secession have been thwarted.

Portraying the situation in Raska region as "extremely explosive" is utterly untrue and ill-intentioned. Even if some incidents do cause concern among the population of Raska, they are exclusively to be blamed on the activities of the terrorist groups involved in arms smuggling and instigating rebellion in order to create the independent "sanjak" state. Some of those terrorists were uncovered and prosecuted in accordance with law.

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is fully entitled to undertake all necessary measures to defend its Constitution, territorial integrity and legal order and will not hesitate to do so whenever those are threatened.

It is not a coincidence that such a statement by OIC should appear at a crucial juncture in the search for a peaceful solution to the crisis in the territories of the former Yugoslavia and particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. By proclaiming the Muslims of Raska as "... the indigenous Bosnian Muslim population ...", the authors of the statement are in fact fuelling expansionist aspirations of the Bosnian Muslim leadership. In so doing, OIC is not only falsifying history, but is, in fact, instigating the spill-over of the armed conflict from Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is exactly the opposite of what the States members of OIC purportedly wish to do.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIC
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.